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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BELGRADE 000813

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SUBJECT: KOSOVO WEEKLY UPDATE: BELGRADE DELIGHTED WITH PART  
OF SARKOZY DELAY PROPOSAL

Classified By: AMBASSADOR MICHAEL C POLT FOR REASONS 1.4(B) AND (D)

11. (SBU) Summary: In a week dominated by speculation on the G8 Summit's impact on the Kosovo status process, the first substantive offer -- French President Sarkozy's proposal to delay a status decision for six months -- is seen by officials here as a triumph for Serbia's Kosovo policy. Serbia also maintained top level engagement with Russia, with both Foreign Minister Jeremic and Prime Minister Kostunica traveling to meet with Russian leaders. ICTY prosecutor Del Ponte made news on Kosovo by appealing to local diplomats to delay any status decision on Kosovo on the grounds that Serbia is cooperating with ICTY and that this might end if Kosovo becomes independent. End Summary.

#### First Reactions to French Proposal

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12. (C) In a lunch with Quint Ambassadors on June 8, Foreign Minister Jeremic was visibly pleased with his visit to Moscow, his meeting "at his own villa" with Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov and what he saw as the central element of the Sarkozy proposal - the reopening of Kosovo negotiations. Jeremic crowed that Lavrov had given him absolute assurances that Russia would veto a resolution opening the path to Kosovo independence "unless Serbiatells us not to."

13. (C) This, to Jeremic, now meant that particularly the U.S. had a global problem on its hands with Russia unequivocally on Serbia's side. The Europeans, he opined, were not in as difficult a position as the U.S., since all they had to do was to agree to a watered down resolution directed by Russia establishing the EU mission in Kosovo without signing on to Ahtisaari providing for open ended negotiations.

14. (U) Publicly, regarding his meeting with Russian FM Lavrov in Moscow, FM Jeremic said that the stands of Belgrade and Moscow on Kosovo are "identical" and he was "grateful" for Russia's support on Kosovo. Jeremic added that the GOS is not seeking indefinite delays and wishes to find a mutually acceptable solution with Pristina. Jeremic also said the news that the G8 had decided to postpone any vote in the UNSC on Kosovo was "good news."

15. (C) While there is not yet a formal GOS reaction to the Sarkozy proposal, other officials have also shared with us their initial reactions to the plan. MFA desk officer Srdjan Miljkovic (protect) called the proposal "a good sign" and compared it to Panama's short-lived but similar proposal in

the UNSC earlier this year. Presidential advisor Branko Radujko (protect) said that "any proposal that delays the process will be widely welcomed in Belgrade...the prevailing opinion here is that delay is good." He added that the Presidency will look forward to more details but "expects to endorse a six-month delay." The most direct response was from the PM's Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) VP Milos Aligrudic (protect) who told poloff "you are about to have a lot of problems with us on Kosovo."

¶16. (C) Only the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) has come out against the proposal. Nenad Prokic (protect throughout), LDP VP, called the offer "disastrous," noting that Belgrade will be "euphoric" but "without a counter-plan." Prokic characterized the GOS goal to "create eternal postponements" and called Sarkozy's plan "a dream come true for Kostunica." "Russia is using Serbia," Prokic added, and that "every time Europe has the initiative (with Serbia), they manage to do the wrong thing."

#### Other Government Activity

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¶17. (U) In advance of his trip to St. Petersburg, PM Kostunica called his upcoming meeting with Russian President Putin "very important" and called Kosovo status "Serbia's greatest interest."

¶18. (U) President Tadic continued his recent foreign tour with a stop in Bucharest during which he and his Romanian counterpart agreed that "compromise" is the best solution in Kosovo. Tadic reiterated that independence is "unacceptable."

¶19. (C) Chief of the Defense Staff General Zdravko Ponos held talks with COMKFOR Kather on 6/8 after which both said the

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situation in Kosovo and along the ABL is "stable and under control." Ponos added that cooperation between the Serbian Army and KFOR is high and extends to combating trafficking and illegal border crossings. Ponos saw no change even after the Sarkozy announcement, telling DAO that such things are political issues and that the Serbian Army will take care of its side of the ABL, and KFOR will handle the other side.

¶10. (SBU) In a briefing for local diplomats following her meetings with GOS officials, ICTY prosecutor Carla Del Ponte raised Kosovo as a factor in ICTY cooperation. Del Ponte asked diplomats to delay on any decision on Kosovo so as not to endanger the revitalized effort by the GOS to cooperate with ICTY.

#### Reported USG Statements and Activities

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¶11. (U) Serbian media gave widespread coverage to President Bush's 6/2 interview on Albanian television, noting USG full support for the Ahtisaari plan. The President's comments that dialogue with Russia on Kosovo would continue also received attention. Media also covered US PermRep Khalilzad's 6/6 confirmation that the UNSC will not vote on a Kosovo resolution until the G8 Summit ends.

¶12. (C) COMMENT: While we expect the GOS to formally reject the full Sarkozy proposal, there will be a lot of plum brandy flowing among GOS leadership circles this weekend. The French proposal is most welcome. It is seen as a repudiation of Ahtisaari's plan, as a top-level European offer to delay and renegotiate Kosovo status, and as an indication of a crumbling of the Western pro-independence forces in face of Russian resolve.

¶13. (C) COMMENT CONTINUED: The added benefit for Serbia's young government coalition is the belief that Yugoslavia's East/West brokering role has been restored and has put Serbia figuratively and literally back on the political map. The

GOS remains clueless as to what to do in the aftermath of what they see as stopping us on Kosovo, other than expecting us to accept as our only option the open-ended administration of Kosovo's "supervised autonomy" and repressing any Albanian attempts to assert independence by force. In Belgrade's eyes, only this way can the U.S. and Europe escape the Prime Minister's foreign policy advisor's accusation in a recent magazine interview that the international community's position on Kosovo so far was "cowardly." END COMMENT.  
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